



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Signs Legislation to Improve Safety in Schools Across Illinois

New Laws Will Help Keep Illinois' Students Safe

ROCKFORD – Governor Pat Quinn today visited RESA Middle School in Rockford to sign three new pieces of legislation that help increase safety, ensure crisis planning and provide security improvements at all Illinois schools. Today's actions are part of Governor Quinn's agenda to provide a safe learning environment for all Illinois students.

"Nothing is more important than keeping our classrooms safe," Governor Quinn said. "Preparation and knowledge are part of that curriculum – preparing for emergencies we hope will never occur, and knowing what to do if confronted with a crisis."

"Parents need to have confidence that their children will be safe throughout the school day and kids should be able to focus solely on their studies," State Schools Superintendent Christopher A. Koch said. "These new laws provide the impetus and resources to make schools safer."

Senate Bill 2710, sponsored by State Senator Bill Cunningham (D-Chicago) and State Representative Lawrence M. Walsh Jr. (D-Elwood), extends a key school safety measure that currently covers public schools to the state's approximately 1,800 private schools. A law proposed and signed by Governor Quinn last year requires all school districts to conduct an annual safety drill, in conjunction with law enforcement officials, which prepares students for potential shooting situations. That law requires public school districts to do an annual review in light of that drill of each school's emergency and crisis plans and procedures. Senate Bill 2710 requires that private schools conduct that same annual review of their crisis plans to better protect the 300,000 private school students in Illinois. The legislation is effective immediately.

Senate Bill 2934, sponsored by State Senator Steve Stadelman (D-Rockford) and Representative Walsh, makes one of Governor Quinn's initiatives to fund school safety improvements an official part of state statutes. Earlier this year the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) awarded \$25 million for security improvements to public K – 12 schools. This legislation allows this school safety program to continue when funds are available and also adds private K – 12 schools, area vocational centers, regional safe schools and public colleges and universities to the list of eligible schools. The new law is effective immediately.

"This is an excellent opportunity to improve local schools and the safety of our children," Senator Stadelman said. "The safety grants are possible because of the work we have done to ensure that students in K-12 deserve a safe learning environment just like those in higher education."

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"I'm proud to work with IEMA, local schools and area vocational schools to make sure when grants become available through IEMA, all entities are qualified and able to apply for these grants to make our schools safer and prepared for any emergency that may arise," Representative Walsh said.

House Bill 5716, sponsored by State Representative Rich Brauer (R-Petersburg) and Senator Andy Manar (D-Bunker Hill), allows public school districts to make updated emergency and crisis plans available to first responders, teachers and administrators through electronic devices such as smart phones, tablets and laptops. The legislation is effective Jan. 1, 2015.

Governor Quinn is committed to ensuring school safety across Illinois. As part of his *Illinois Jobs Now!* construction program, he recently announced \$25 million for more than 1,300 projects to enhance security at schools across Illinois.

Following the deadly school shooting in Newtown, Conn. in December 2012, Governor Quinn convened top experts from across the state for a School Safety Summit to develop short- and long-term actions to further strengthen school safety. The summit included school district organizations, law enforcement agencies and state agencies, including IEMA. The Governor also led the charge in passing legislation requiring all Illinois schools to hold active safety drills with local law enforcement to ensure they are as prepared as possible in the event of a shooting incident.

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